***A Rose for Emily*** by William Faulkner (1930)

**Historical Context:** post-war USA and decline of old South; Faulkner: proud but disillusioned southerner.

**Setting:** post-war South, Jefferson town; rather Gothic

**Plot**:Eight events from the story are given here. In the space below, list them first as they are given in the story.

Then, put them in the order that they would actually have occurred in time.

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| **Events:** Homer’s arriving in town, the visit of the aldermen, Emily’s buying the poison, Colonel Sartoris’s deciding not to tax Emily, the death of Emily’s father, the stench coming from the house, the arrival of Emily’s relatives, Homer’s disappearance |

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| ***As disclosed in the narrative*** | ***Chronological order*** |
| 1. the visit of the aldermen | 1. the death of Emily’s father |
| 1. Colonel Sartoris’s deciding not to tax Emily | 1. Colonel Sartoris’s deciding not to tax Emily |
| 1. the stench coming from the house | 1. Homer’s arriving in town |
| 1. Homer’s arriving in town | 1. the arrival of Emily’s relatives |
| 1. the death of Emily’s father | 1. Emily’s buying the poison |
| 1. the arrival of Emily’s relatives | 1. Homer’s disappearance |
| 1. Homer’s disappearance | 1. the stench coming from the house |
| 1. Emily’s buying the poison | 1. the visit of the aldermen |

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is the story told with no regard to chronological order?
2. How would you characterize this type of narration in technical terms?
3. Who is telling the story?
4. What is the significance of the narrator’s use of "we" to tell the story?
5. What can you say about the character of Emily?
6. What does Emily and her family represent for the town’s people and the narrator?
7. What values does the narrator appear to hold?
8. What is the significance of the title?

**Answers:**

1. It’s fragmented with use of flashback/flash-forward to create more suspense; for ambiguity; make reader more involved in attributing meaning and interpreting text; to reflect complexity of human experience; similitude to brain functioning; reflect influence of Freud’s theory
2. Non-linear /fragmented narrative: typical of Modernist narrative
3. Narrator: unnamed single male/female, or group of townspeople from Jefferson; 1st per plural “we”; represents the collective voice of the townspeople.
4. The story is more compelling when told from the townspeople's perspective because it adds layers of mystery and intrigue surrounding Emily. Unlike a first-person narrative from Emily, which might reveal her thoughts and motivations directly, the townspeople's observations create a sense of distance, non- reliability, and ambiguity. This technique allows readers to piece together Emily's story from scattered perspectives, enriching the narrative's depth. Also, ***subjectivity***: (typically Modernist), so no omniscient narrator- various interpretations - questioning universal values and morality
5. A mentally/ emotionally unstable character; victim of social norms, but frightening, cold-blood killer; strong but weak;
6. They symbolize the old proud South, old aristocratic norms/ values, **but** also represent rigidity, refusal of change, and the declining South in face of modernity
7. The narrator speaks for the community, holding their values, sharing their gossip, perspectives, and judgments about Emily.
8. **Title**: possibly, a rose is a symbol of respect to victim Emily (old South) fighting against, ***and*** for change; also possibly, a symbol of the decay and degradation of the South (the secret horror in Emily’s house)

**Themes**: **tradition vs. modernity; modern man’s isolation/ alienation; decay of old values** (theGothic elements and setting heighten the sense of isolation and reinforce man’s sense of existential crisis.)